

Loaded Bellaire again the team to beat

By MK BOWER
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With the end of the regular season comes the conclusion of yet another pristine campaign for Bellaire, perhaps the most storied — and in many corners despised — program in the Greater Houston area.

At 27-0, the Cardinals are top-ranked in the area, in the state and, in some polls, the nation.

But for a program that has won seven state championships, including two in the last seven years, regular-season accomplishments only go so far.

Postseason successes have come to define the Cardinals under coach Rocky P. Manuel, a tireless promoter of the Bellaire tradition and a man well aware of what it will take for his team to again run the six-week gauntlet to the Class 5A crown.

"Baseball in Harris County is tremendous," Manuel said. "The coaching, teams and talent that we face throughout the year is unbelievable. That's why I truly feel that whoever comes out of Region III has to be a favorite to play for the state championship."

"Just the competition that we have played makes whoever comes out of the region battle-tested and ready to go."

As is usually the case, the Cardinals are loaded.

Offensively, Bellaire has impressive balance, especially in the power department, where three players have hit at least five home runs. Catcher James Sweeney (seven), outfielder Chris Young (six) and pitcher/outfielder Adam Laird (five) spark an offense that has smashed 35 homers on the season and hit at a .371 clip.

Trey George leads the team in hitting (.521) and is third in RBIs (33), behind Sweeney (34) and Matt Ueckert (35). Young, meanwhile, also led the area in stolen bases (39), as Bellaire blitzed District 17-5A foes with its lethal, all-around attack.

On the mound, it was more of the same. The Cardinals rank near the top in team ERA (1.23) thanks to Laird (5-0) and Ueckert (8-0, 1.30 ERA).

Bellaire pitched just 154 innings on the season, an average of under six innings per game, reflective of numerous run-ruled victories where the Cardinals' offense and pitching simply overwhelmed opponents.

But Bellaire produced similarly gaudy statistics last season, when it entered the playoffs with just one loss before falling to eventual

Baseball rankings

FINAL	
Class 5A	
Team	Record
1. Bellaire	27-0
2. Klein Oak	23-4
3. Elkins	22-4-2
4. Cypress Falls	20-2-1
5. Klein	20-5
6. Clements	20-5-1
7. Lamar	24-3
8. Ball	24-3
9. Kingwood	23-3
10. North Shore	21-4
11. Katy	18-5
12. Nimitz	19-5
13. Memorial	16-7
14. Humble	20-7
15. Clear Creek	17-7

Class 4A/Others	
Team	Record
1. Little Cypress-Mauriceville	24-4
2. Lumberton	23-3
3. St. Thomas	21-3
4. Santa Fe	23-3
5. Episcopal	22-5
6. Jasper	20-6
7. Brenham	20-6-1
8. Texas City	17-7
9. Second Baptist	22-8
10. St. Pius	19-11

regional champion Elkins in the area round.

That 2-1 setback to the Knights made one axiom about baseball crystal clear: Good pitching will always beat good hitting.

"If you get dominant pitching performances, it neutralizes everything," Manuel said, referring to James Loney's brilliant outing against the Cardinals in last year's playoffs. "We had a game situation where we gave up only three or four hits, but two of those were solo home runs. We could only scratch out a run and we got beat, but those things happen."

The loss may have dented Bellaire's armor of invincibility, but it did little to diminish the confidence Manuel has in his athletes.

The Cardinals are again the team to beat in the race for the regional title, and while worthy adversaries are present — Elkins, Clements, Kingwood and Galveston Ball look like the best bets — Manuel is quick to express his belief that only Bellaire can beat Bellaire.

"I get criticized for it, but I'll be quite honest — I'd rather my kids be overconfident than scared," he said. "Any message that you are going to get from Bellaire is that we know that we are good. And hopefully, our play will show it and we'll come out on top."

"I'll tell you what. If you've got a good team and you worry about your team playing well, they you will come out on top most of the

Playoff pairings

Class 5A Region II	
Berkner vs. S. Garland (15-8)	TBA
Marshall (22-4), bye	
Dallas Adams vs. Third 12-5A	TBA
Mesquite bye	
Temple (16-14) vs. Pflugerville (16-10)	TBA
Cypress Falls (20-2-1), bye	
Spring (17-9) vs. Cy Creek (12-11-1)	Game 1: 7:30 p.m. Wed., Cy Creek Game 2: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Spring *Game 3: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Cy Creek
Lk. Highlands (14-10) vs. Rowlett (17-8)	Game 1: 5 p.m. Wed., Lake Highlands Game 2: 5 p.m. Friday, Rowlett *Game 3: 1 p.m. Saturday, Rowlett
Dallas Skyline, bye	
Dallas Carter vs. Lufkin (22-3)	Game 1: 7 p.m. Thursday, Kilgore Game 2: 6 p.m. Saturday, Kilgore *Game 3: 30 minutes after Game 2
Allen, bye	
Waco (13-16) vs. RR Westwood (18-10)	Game 1: 7:30 p.m. Wed., Westwood Game 2: 6 p.m. Friday, Waco *Game 3: 30 minutes after Game 2
Klein Oak (23-4), bye	
Klein (20-5) vs. Bryan (18-7)	Game 1: 7 p.m. Wednesday, Klein Game 2: 7 p.m. Friday, Bryan *Game 3: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Conroe
Killeen Ellison (17-12), bye	
Class 5A Region III	
Lamar (24-3) vs. Reagan (15-8)	Game 1: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Butler Game 2: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Butler *Game 3: 1 p.m. Saturday, Delmar
Elkins (22-4-2), bye	
Taylor (17-5) vs. Clements (20-5-1)	Game 1: 8 p.m. Wed., Langham Creek Game 2: 5 p.m. Friday, Langham Creek *Game 3: 8 p.m. Friday, L. Creek
Milby (18-6), bye	
Memorial (16-8) vs. Rayburn (14-11)	TBA
Galveston Ball (24-3), bye	
Bay Lee (15-11) vs. Clear Lake (16-10-1)	Game 1: 7:30 p.m. Wed., Lee Game 2: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Clear Lake *Game 3: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Lee
Kingwood (23-3), bye	

time. If you worry about someone else's team, then that is energy and time spent on things that are out of your control.

"All we're worried about is how Bellaire plays. And if the ball bounces our way, then we are going to be pretty tough to handle."

Notes — When Elkins topped Fort Bend Austin 18-7 to claim the top seed in 20-5A, it marked the eighth time in eight varsity seasons the Knights have reached the playoffs. ... Ball sophomore pitcher Matt Leva continued his scintillating season by striking out 12 batters in the Tors' 1-0 win over Clear Creek. Leva's one-hit victory not only gave Ball the 24-5A crown, it was his third of the season. Leva also has two no-hitters this year. ... Nimitz pitcher/third baseman

Sharpstown (13-11) vs. Austin (9-11)	
Game 1: 7 p.m. Friday, Barnett	
Game 2: 10 a.m. Saturday, Butler	
*Game 3: 1 p.m. Saturday, Butler	
Katy (18-5), bye	
Hastings (10-15) vs. FB Austin (18-8)	8 p.m. Wednesday, Katy
Bellaire (27-0), bye	
Stratford (15-11) vs. Humble (20-7)	Game 1: 7 p.m. Thursday, Humble Game 2: 7 p.m. Friday, Stratford *Game 3: 7 p.m. Sat., Jersey Village
North Shore (21-4), bye	
Deer Park (12-11) vs. Clear Creek (17-7)	TBA
Nimitz (20-5), bye	
Class 4A Region III	
Belton vs. Magnolia (9-14)	Game 1: 7 p.m. Thursday, Belton Game 2: 2 p.m. Saturday, Conroe *Game 3: 30 minutes after Game 2
Little Cypress-Mauriceville (24-4), bye	
Livingston (15-6) vs. PN-Groves (14-10)	Game 1: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, PN-G Game 2: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Livingston *Game 3: 1 p.m. Saturday, PN-G
Brenham (20-6-1) bye	
Dayton (14-8) vs. Davis (11-7)	Game 1: 7 p.m. Wednesday, Delmar Game 2: 7 p.m. Friday, Dayton *Game 3: 7 p.m. Saturday, Dayton
Angleton (19-6), bye	
Texas City (17-7) vs. Lamar Cons. (11-10)	Game 1: 7 p.m. Thursday, Lamar Cons. Game 2: 1 p.m. Saturday, Texas City *Game 3: 4 p.m. Saturday, Texas City
Waltrip (14-6), bye	
Harker Heights vs. Huntsville (12-11)	Game 1: 7 p.m. Friday, Killeen Game 2: 2 p.m. Sat., Sam Houston State *Game 3: 30 minutes after Game 2
Lumberton (23-3), bye	
Jasper (20-6) vs. WO-Stark (14-10-3)	Game 1: 8 p.m. Tuesday, Jasper Game 2: 8 p.m. Friday, WO-S *Game 3: noon Saturday, WO-S
Cedar Park, bye	
For. Brook (19-6) vs. Scarborough (15-4)	7:30 p.m. Thursday, Lansford
Santa Fe (23-3), bye	
Friendswood (16-8) vs. Bay City (16-8)	TBA
Willis (17-6), bye	
* — If necessary	

Scott Brunasso has signed with Sam Houston State. Brunasso hit .358 with four homers, and on the mound finished 5-2 with a 2.82 ERA and 65 strikeouts in 49 innings. ... Eisenhower senior Miguel Mercado closed the year with a 5-for-5 performance in an 11-4 win over MacArthur. Mercado had three singles, a double and his seventh home run. ...

Little Cypress-Mauriceville, champions in 20-4A, won its fourth district crown in the last six years. ... Second Baptist (TAPPS 5-4A) clinched its third straight district title with wins over St. Joe's (7-3) and Concordia (16-3). ... Baytown Christian Academy (TAPPS 8-3A) also won a third consecutive district crown. ... Jasper is making its eighth straight postseason appearance.

Final baseball statistics

Class 5A					
BATTING					
Player, school	AB	R	HR	BI	Avg.
Archie Panfililli, Ball.....	76	27	44	39	.579
Trey George, Bellaire.....	71	33	37	33	.521
Miguel Mercado, Eisenhower.....	65	27	33	25	.508
S. Musselwhite, Lamar.....	89	32	45	42	.500
J. Josh Ford, Bay Lee.....	56	17	28	12	.495
J. Merendino, W. Brook.....	31	32	45	17	.494
J. Barfield, Klein.....	77	32	38	48	.494
Vincent Blue, Lamar.....	75	45	37	29	.493
Ryan Hughes, Ball.....	78	24	38	48	.487
Luke Smith, Lee.....	70	22	34	17	.486
J. Baker, Memorial.....	74	18	35	26	.473
B. Vorse, Rayburn.....	64	17	30	18	.468
D. Berger, Sp. Woods.....	60	20	28	24	.467
Josh Bowen, Lamar.....	71	31	33	38	.465
J. Sweeney, Bellaire.....	61	23	28	34	.459
R. Castellucci, C. Ranch.....	72	25	33	17	.458
R. Rhymes, Lamar.....	57	26	26	18	.456
C. Schindewolf, Kl. Oak.....	77	30	35	31	.455
M. Goodson, Ball.....	80	23	36	35	.450
Bear Bay, No. Shore.....	81	25	36	17	.444
E. Konescheck, Katy.....	71	28	31	12	.437
Rodriguez, So. Houston.....	72	21	31	18	.431
P. Dalton, Memorial.....	79	26	34	23	.430

HOME RUNS	
Player, school	HR
Josh Barfield, Klein.....	13
Justin Ard, Cl. Lake.....	8
Shawn Ferguson, Lamar.....	8
Horacio Correa, Cy Falls.....	7
Matthew Goodson, Ball.....	7
Scott Homann, Kingwood.....	7
Chad Huffman, Elkins.....	7
Miguel Mercado, Eisenhower.....	7
Stuart Musselwhite, Lamar.....	7
Hector Napeleoni, Dulles.....	7
Mike Pankratz, Taylor.....	7
James Sweeney, Bellaire.....	7
Brian Temko, FB Austin.....	7
Josh Bowen, Lamar.....	6
Ch. Flores, Nimitz.....	6
J.B. Sowdya, Kingwood.....	6
Wardell Starling, Elkins.....	6
Chris Young, Bellaire.....	6

RUNS BATTED IN	
Player, school	RBI
Josh Barfield, Klein.....	48
Stuart Musselwhite, Lamar.....	42
Archie Panfil, Ball.....	39
Josh Bowen, Lamar.....	38
Matthew Goodson, Ball.....	35
Matt Ueckert, Bellaire.....	35
James Sweeney, Bellaire.....	34
Trey George, Bellaire.....	33
Austin Sumnerlin, Sp. Woods.....	32
Carl Schindewolf, Klein Oak.....	31
Brian Temko, FB Austin.....	31
Shawn Ferguson, Lamar.....	30
Horacio Correa, Cy Falls.....	29
Chad Huffman, Elkins.....	29
J.B. Sowdya, Kingwood.....	29
Wardell Starling, Elkins.....	29

STOLEN BASES	
Player, school	SB
Chris Young, Bellaire.....	39
Ryan Barker, Humble.....	24
Ryan Trevino, Humble.....	22
Kyle Foster, Spring.....	21
Patrick Conroy, Memorial.....	20
Josh Jones, Westbury.....	19
J. Merendino, W. Brook.....	19
Phillip Allen, Kempner.....	18
Vincent Blue, Lamar.....	18
Garrett Oakley, Kempner.....	17
A. Albright, Bay. Sterling.....	16
Colby Bates, Klein Oak.....	16
Patrick Court, Deer Park.....	16
Michael Faherty, Cy Creek.....	16
M. Gilbertson, Bellaire.....	16
Eric Konescheck, Katy.....	16

Chad Phelps, Clear Lake						67
TEAM PITCHING						
School	IP	H	BB	SO	ERA	
Clear Lake	173.2	119	90	188	1.17	
Bellaire	154.0	90	70	169	1.23	
North Shore	155.0	124	67	159	1.45	
Bryan	170.0	110	67	192	1.52	
Ball	175.0	105	69	236	1.64	
Cy Falls	153.0	98	62	245	1.69	
Elkins	175.0	122	87	208	1.76	
FB Austin	167.2	128	80	185	2.09	
Nimitz	150.0	135	71	144	2.10	
Dulles	155.0	115	76	193	2.12	
Clements	165.0	126	57	217	2.20	
Kingwood	164.0	141	51	193	2.21	
Katy	150.0	110	74	176	2.27	
Clear Creek	157.0	122	81	202	2.27	
Class 4A/Others						
BATTING						
Player, school	AB	R	HR	BI	Avg.	
R. Petree, Luth. No.	55	26	31	25	.564	
J. Broussard, Hard-Jeff.	80	14	46	25	.561	
Joe Kirby, Silsbee	70	n/a	37	n/a	.529	
J. Reynolds, Sec. Bapt.	100	52	39	n/a	.520	
J. Hickle, La Grange	62	32	32	23	.516	
D. Carnline, Canyon Crk.	59	18	30	15	.508	
R. Matisek, Palacios	73	17	37	35	.507	
R. Thomas, Luling	64	18	32	33	.500	
C. Seckinger, Sec. Bapt.	89	33	44	34	.494	
J. Natho, Yoakum	66	21	32	28	.485	
Clint Sohr, Angleton	71	26	34	21	.479	
P. McKeller, Hard-Jeff.	55	n/a	26	n/a	.473	
M. Calhoun, Palacios	72	3	34	14	.472	
C. Buechner, LC-M	70	20	33	20	.471	
HOME RUNS						
Player, school					HR	
Heath Konesheck, Sealy					9	
Cody Strait, Hardin-Jeff.					9	
Ryan Wagner, Yoakum					8	
Gene Filyaw, Jasper					7	
Brian Martin, Texas City					7	
Kyle Reynolds, Second Bapt.					7	
Will Wade, Texas City					7	
Chris Buechner, LC-M					6	
Dennis Clark, St. Pius					6	
Matt Moake, Episcopal					6	
Matt Vaglica, Hardin-Jeff.					6	
Jeremy Gray, LC-M					5	
Joe Holland, LC-M					5	
RUNS BATTED IN						
Player, school					RBI	
Donyell Jones, Brenham					46	
Matt Vaglica, Hardin-Jeff.					42	
Justin Humphries, Episcopal					40	
Kyle Reynolds, Second Bapt.					39	
Adrian Escobar, Brenham					37	
Dennis Clark, St. Pius					37	
Cody Strait, Hardin-Jeff.					36	
Robert Matisek, Palacios					35	
Chris Seckinger, Second Bapt.					34	
Ryan Thomas, Luling					33	
Will Wade, Texas City					33	
Matt Miller, La Grange					32	
Gene Filyaw, Jasper					31	
Brent Bohannon, John Cooper					30	
Tyler Reeves, LC-M					30	
Josh Walker, Baytown Chr.					30	